

## WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 11 March 2026 at 7.33pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

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**Present:** M Housden (Chairman) K Mackender (Vice-Chairman) G Byrne, J Lucas, S Wilkin.

*In attendance* Parish Clerk/RFO  
County and District Councillor L Dupré  
District Councillor M Inskip

26/033 **Apologies for absence** – L Holdaway (Work)

26/034 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests - none

Prejudicial interests - none

26/035 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

26/036 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports for March, previously circulated, were noted and the meeting was opened for County and District Councillors to take questions.

Noted that the Public Spaces Order consultation period had ended and this item was on the ECDC Operational Committee agenda for 23 March meeting. The County and District Councillors gave congratulations on the confirmation that the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan had been made by ECDC and the Policies contained therein would be used in determining planning applications for Witcham.

G Byrne asked if there was any update on the progress of the LHI application and it was noted that checks were going on and parishes were likely to be contacted May onwards regarding next stages and given opportunity to make a presentation to the CCC Panel.

7.45pm The County and District Councillors were thanked and they left the meeting. The business of the agenda resumed.

26/037 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

26/038 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 4 February were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date was signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting.

Proposed G Byrne, seconded K Mackender.

26/039 **Matters Arising**

26/025, 26/009b) *Local Highways Initiative Programme. Mepal – Witcham Road speed reduction measures:* Noted that Mepal Parish Council felt it was not in a position to open talks again until after the outcome of their survey and other LHI bid, ie around October this year.

26/040 **Local Government Reorganisation – public consultation**

Some of the Councillors had attended the online presentation by ECDC for their preferred option. G Byrne gave a report on the main points.

The 4 proposals in this consultation were made by the following Councils (November 2025):

**Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council proposed 2 unitary councils.**

These would comprise the district areas of:

- **North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough:** Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland
- **Greater Cambridge:** Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire

**Cambridgeshire County Council proposed 2 unitary councils.**

These would comprise the district areas of:

- **North West:** Peterborough, Fenland, Huntingdonshire
- **South East:** Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire

**Huntingdonshire District Council proposed 3 unitary councils.**

These would comprise the district areas of:

- **North East:** Peterborough, Fenland, East Cambridgeshire
- **Central Huntingdonshire:** Huntingdonshire
- **South West:** Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire

**Peterborough City Council and Fenland District Council proposed 3 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils.**

These would comprise the district areas of:

- **Greater Peterborough:** Peterborough and 9 wards from Huntingdonshire
- **Mid Cambridgeshire:** Fenland, East Cambridgeshire and 17 wards from Huntingdonshire
- **Greater Cambridge:** Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough>

**Resolved** that the Clerk should respond to consultation using the online survey on behalf of the Council in support of the proposal put forward by the County Council for the area. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman. Councillors and members of the public were all welcome to participate in this consultation process and complete the survey on-line. Notice had been posted on Witcham Parish Council website.

*Clerk*

26/041 **Planning Matters**

26/00195/ERN Office, The Bungalow, Hive Road. To convert a building for an office use to a dwelling, which requires to add new bigger roof windows and one side window.

This application had been published on the District Council's weekly planning application list but as an ERN application, it was not for consultation with the Parish Council. A further application had been received for the existing dwelling on this site and also circulated to Councillors as follows:

25/ 00194/FUL The Bungalow, Hive Road. Single storey side extensions and installation of rooflights and PV Panels.

**Resolved** that the Council respond - no comment. Proposed G Byrne, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk*

26/042 **Witcham Neighbourhood Plan**

The Referendum had taken place on 12 February 2026.

Yes – 141 votes

No – 14 votes.

41.4% turnout.

The Witcham Neighbourhood Plan had been 'made' at the District Council's meeting on 24 February 2026, and its Policies would be considered by the District Council in determining planning applications within the parish. This completed the work of the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

**Resolved** to write to the Chair and members of the Working Group to thank them for all their work to produce the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan.

Proposed J Lucas, seconded S Wilkin.

Chairman confirmed he held the survey questionnaires (which contained no personal details). He would arrange for disposal as they would no longer be required. (GDPR/Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy).

*Clerk*

*Chairman*

Councillors discussed next stages, ie implementation, including dealing with the Community Actions identified in the survey and the work of the village conservation group.

**Resolved** that G Byrne would analyse and summarise the policies into a simple document for future reference in dealing with planning applications.

Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

*GB*

An action list for the Community Actions from the Neighbourhood Plan would also be prepared.

*Clerk*

Noted that from fundraising carried out by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, £177.91 was still held and that the Group would pass this on to the Witcham Conservation Group in order that they could continue with projects in accordance with the Community Actions identified within the Neighbourhood Plan.

*NPWG*

26/043 **Finance and Administration Matters**

**Exclusion of the Press and Public:** It is hereby resolved that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at agenda items 26/043a to 26/043b), namely Village Hall Deed of Right of Way & Car Park, and RSPB Lease, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded from this meeting and they are herewith instructed to withdraw. Proposed Chairman and agreed by all.

8.35pm Meeting closed to the public.

- a) **Deed of Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall.** The Village Hall Committee (Trustees) had put forward further amendments. Deferred to next meeting as not all councillors dealing with this were present to comment.
- b) **RSPB Lease.** Clerk gave a summary of progress since the end of last year and it was noted that the Council's solicitors were awaiting final Lease from RSPB team.

*Deferred*

8.45pm Chairman re-opened meeting to the public.

There were no members of the public present.

- a) **Receipts and payments schedule** for March had been previously circulated. Documents had been checked by G Byrne.

**Resolved** to approve the receipts and payments for March and consent for Clerk to pay some expected invoices due before the end of the financial year, ie 31 March 2026. Cheques to be released.

Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin.

*Clerk*

26/043 **Finance and Administration Matters (cont)**

Noted that the grass contractor had started the first spring cuts.

**Resolved** that the Clerk would contact the contractor to request that after the first cut at the recreation ground the surface should be swept to remove excess mulch material. Possibly extend to first two cuts depending on volume of cuttings. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

b) Review and approve policies. Clerk had completed review of first tranche of policies and circulated to Councillors for review.

c) **Resolved** to approve all policies presented. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin. Chairman signed original copies.

d) Year-end preparations:

Internal Audit – 30 April 2026

Clerk had attended CAPALC Drop-in session earlier in the day and she gave report regarding requirements under the Assertion 10 of the AGAR form this year. Many of the checks to be carried out had been in place for years by internal auditors and the new form merely grouped them as a separate item on the AGAR. Additional compliance requirements such as dedicated email addresses, domain owned by the Council, a dot gov uk domain, compliance with the Publication Scheme were already in place. The IT Policy had now been adopted.

Clerk

Website: Clerk gave update on TEEC Accessibility audit and confirmed they would be dealing with corrections to update the site and be compliant. Agreed costs of £35 to fix any outstanding issues was acceptable and Clerk to liaise with Chairman as required.

Clerk/  
Chairman

Accessibility Statement – confirmed TEEC to add short note within statement clarifying that the external guidance is intended for general use across current Windows versions.

APM – Clerk was drafting the Annual Report and Accounts which would be completed after the year-end accounts had been agreed.

Clerk

Content for next newsletter discussed and this would be prepared for circulation in the next couple of weeks. Letters inviting village organisations to present their annual reports at the APM would be despatched soon.

Clerk

Clerk

As informed in the report for policies, the Clerk had attended the quarterly Branch meeting of SLCC on 6 March 2026, where the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA) had reported that for the 2026/7 financial year, the AGAR forms would be completed on-line and submitted to the external auditor. A 'wet' signed copy would still be required. Further details and training to follow during the summer.

Clerk

26/044 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

G Byrne was thanked for completing the weekly inspections of play equipment and recreation ground. The sign on the railings had been repaired.

A copy of the last annual village inspection had been re-circulated and Chairman confirmed he had replaced the faded dog signs and straightened the bench as far as he could. The Annual Inspection by the independent inspector was expected to be completed very soon.

Clerk

Chairman advised that the Cricket Club, which had now disbanded, was arranging the disposal of its equipment.

26/045 **The Slade**

Chairman reported on potential dumping of soil on meadows East of The Slade. The local authorities had been engaged and the situation was being monitored.

**26/046 Highways and Streetlighting**

- a) To note any items reported to Highways Authority – none.  
Noted that following litter issues at Witcham Toll, near the bus stop, the District Council had indicated to the nearby resident that they would now install a litter bin and arrange regular emptying.
- b) Monthly speed data reports. Chairman advised that there had been a software update glitch and unfortunately the months data had been lost. G Byrne confirmed he would be contacting the Speedwatch team to re-start sessions.

**26/047 Correspondence**

The following items of information/interest, and invitations to events had been circulated and unless recorded below as otherwise, were noted:

Local Government Re-organisation – GB & JL attended Webinar 25.2.26.  
East Cambs Parish and Community Forum 18 March 2026.  
E CDC press releases: New Bin Scheme.  
E CDC Agendas and Minutes full Council, Planning, Finance, Operational Service Committees.  
TMC Roadworks.  
WGA Employment Rights Act.  
Training courses: play inspections, Code of Conduct.  
NALC newsletters, bulletins and events, including Annual Conference.  
East Cambs Parish Conference Isleham.  
Cambs ACRE Newsletter.

Also noted that a Government Bill was being considered to give more mandatory powers under the Councillors Code of Conduct and Civility and Respect Pledge.

**26/032 Date of next meeting: 15 April 2026**

Clerk confirmed that the hall was no longer available for the **APM** scheduled for 30 April and had now been moved to **Wednesday 6 May 2026**. Future APM's would also have to be held in May due to a commitment for a nearby group to use the main hall most Wednesdays between Sept/Oct through to April each year. The 2027 APM would therefore be moved to 5 May 2027. Published calendars to be amended.

Clerk

Meeting closed at 9.25pm.

**Schedule of Receipts and Payments**

|           |  | £       | £     | £       |
|-----------|--|---------|-------|---------|
| Receipts: | Nil  |         |       |         |
| Payments: | 002249 TEEC  | 70.00   | 14.00 | 84.00   |
|           | 002250/51/BACS Salary expenses March<br>incl reimbursement Clerk's<br>Expenses Oct-March | 962.26) |       | 1097.30 |
|           | 002252 Truelink Ltd (Feb)  | 89.00   | 17.80 | 106.80  |
|           | 002253 Witcham Village Hall  | 236.00  |       | 236.00  |
|           | d/d ICO  | 47.00   |       | 47.00   |
|           | b/c Lloyds fees Dec-Jan debited 17.2.26  | 5.17    |       | 5.17    |
|           | c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails<br>debited 20.2.26                            | 32.20   | 6.44  | 38.64   |

Signed..... Dated .....